

A RICH COLLECTION OF MENUS

OSCAR OF THE WALDORF HAS GATHERED THEM.

Range from Feasts for Royalty to Lists of one-cent dishes at St. Andrew's Refuge. Famous Banquets of the Pilgrims. American Dinner Cards Best.

There is no man in his field. That of Oscar of the Waldorf-Astoria is the collection of menus and he has at the present time about 25,000, which it has taken him twenty years to collect. There are cards of dinners given in China and in Persia, and in fact in all parts of the civilized world, by societies, to individuals, to communities, national and personal. There is a menu of the Turin Club printed on black pasteboard with the name of a codin and ornamented with the form of a coupon, each division of which entitles the holder to a certain dish and the whole taking him the entire jour-

ney. A wealth of material is at hand, in fact, that it has been found necessary to classify the cards in about twenty-five divisions.

For example, under the head "commercial" are 241 menus, clubs, 75; law associations, 9; musical, 3; holidays, 54; Waldorf yacht races, 3; complimentary, 250, &c. There are a few menus classified as "white elephants," which it is explained are the cumbersome kind that have to be boxed and kept apart.

Judging from these examples the United States is far ahead of other countries in this line of artistic achievement, and while the cards often err on the side of overelaboration a considerable percentage show the finest taste of the stationer and engraver, to say nothing of the artist who has added his tribute of water color, sepia, wash drawing, black and white illustration.

Next to our menus, it is the opinion of the menu expert who has the collection at the Astor Library, numbering about 25,000, under her supervision, as well as those of Oscar, come the English, who do



SIMPLE MENUS OF THE PAST.

There is no menu extant of the inaugural banquet on the occasion of Washington's becoming the first President, and the printed menus of this country, in fact, do not go back further than the hundred years. There is a reprint in the Oscar collection of a dinner card showing the dishes at a banquet at the Old Colony Club in Boston, dated 1789, but this was taken from a history and there is no authoritative proof that a card was used on that occasion.

At the opening dinner of the Hotel Pontchartrain, Michigan, October 29, 1907, on the elaborate menu was printed a copy of the first menu extant of a dinner given at the Chateau Pontchartrain by Mme. la Chancelière. Menu du repas au roi Louis le Grand en 1615. The menu is in old French and the several services denote the number of guests served. Incidentally the collection of dinner cards shows that the French service and dishes are universal and that whether in South Africa or in Persia the extraordinary banquet is never of native foods and service, but always French, the cards being written in that popular language and the dishes prepared either by French chefs or according to their recipes.

Three menus clasped together show the card used at the opening of the Waldorf Hotel, the list of dishes served at the opening of the new Hotel Astor, June 9, 1904, which is a simple menu of glazed white with gilt edges and lettering and a photograph on it of the Astor, and the first menu used at the Plaza Hotel, dated September 30, 1907. This is the most elaborate of the three.

First in point of artistic beauty and expenditure stand the menus of the Pilgrims Society of New York, who from time to time gather at celebrated hotels or restaurants in honor of some specially distinguished guest. One of these is doily taken from a white box and many tissue paper wrappings, disclosing thick leaves, on which the gilt lettering, heraldic designs and illuminated emblems show splendidly. You read: "Dinner in Honor of His Grace Lord Archbishop of Canterbury by the Pilgrims Society of the United States 13 October, 1904."

For special ornamentation there is the Bishop's crest inset within a heliotrope oval, pink scrolls of "The Pilgrims," and "He et Ubique," with a miniature of the familiar picture of the Pilgrims as Chaucer described them.

The same society gave on Tuesday, October 15, 1907, a dinner to the Right Rev. Lord Bishop of London at the Plaza Hotel, which is similarly commemorated by a handsome dinner card, the heraldic emblems of the Bishop and the same

picturesque group of itinerant story tellers.

The dinners given from time to time by the New York Chamber of Commerce called for menus only a trifle less elaborate than those of the Pilgrims. Glancing at them casually, you would say that the quantity and quality of food served was of more importance to this august body than the manner in which the items were placed artistically on the bills of fare. However, they give the impression of solidity and permanence if they do occasionally suggest apocryphal seizures.

The oldest of the Chamber of Commerce cards is dated about a hundred years ago. One card particularly well executed in English black letter reads on the title page, "Banquet of the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York, in honor of the Guests who attended the Dedication Ceremonies at the Opening of the Build-

ing of the Chamber, No. 65 Liberty street, New York, at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, Nov. 11, 1902."

An interesting contrast to these in the matter and manner of which is shown by the menu which emphasizes the "Banquet given by the London Chamber of Commerce to the Chamber of Commerce, City of New York, at the Grocers' Hall, Prince Street, E. C. By the Courtesy of the Worshipful Company of Grocers, June 5, 1905, the Hon. Lord Brassey, K. C. B., in the chair."

Several of the menus of the Chamber of Commerce dinners give a description of the ornamentation in the style of an appendix to an art catalogue. This is the case of the menu for the 115th annual dinner, May 8, 1883, at Delmonico's, a very simple style, gilt edged, folded card, and for that of November 23, 1897, which reads:

The illustration on the menu is a combination of steel plate and die work. The principal feature of the design is the consolidation of the two cities under one government, which is suggested by the figures of two females mutually crowned, with hands joined and holding the shields of New York and Brooklyn. At the base of this is shown a pleasing array of the feast, on one side of which is the steamship St. Louis and on the other the famous locomotive No. 999 outlined against the seal of the Chamber of Commerce.

As a suggestion to the diners one of the famous menus of the Amen Club, a printed pamphlet of the shape and size of a Salvation Army War Cry, has this note appended:

Those who feel the inspiration to assist in the matter of entertainment by inter-polating spontaneous toasts, witticisms and comments we thank sincerely for the admirable self-restraint they show in keeping absolutely silent.

If you are surfeited by continual reading of elaborate feasts take from the heaped up collection a bit of pasteboard on which is written by a self-invited guest the list of dishes at a feast on September 19, 1907, at St. Andrew's Refuge. The bill of fare reads:

Soup with spaghetti 1.01
Fish, boiled or baked01
Baked beans01
Coffee01
Rice white bread01

One of the interesting menus of the division marked "States" is that of the Montana Society, showing a well executed Indian head on the cover and after a most elaborate list of dishes a touching poem written by J. Campbell Cory. It reads:

Take me back to old Montana,
Where there's plenty room and air,
Where there's cottonwood and pine trees,
Litter root and plenty pear,
Where there ain't no bluff nor glitter.

There is a menu of a royal luncheon held at the Guildhall at the coronation of King Edward and Queen Alexandra November 25, 1902, on a rather cheap paper with colored photographs of several of the stately buildings of the city. The coloring and arrangement are very artistic and quite different from any American cards in general effect.

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